

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (previously amended): A water-decomposable fibrous sheet in which an aqueous solution is infiltrated, comprising:

water-dispersible fibers having a fiber length of at most 20 mm; and

colloidal silica gelled with an electrolyte contained in the aqueous solution, wherein

a content of the colloidal silica is from 0.25 g to 25 g in terms of silicic acid anhydride, relative to 100 g of the fibers, and a concentration of the electrolyte is at least 0.2% by mass, wherein

the electrolyte is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate, zinc sulfate, aluminum sulfate, alum, sodium chloride, calcium chloride, magnesium sulfate, zinc nitrate, potassium chloride, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogencarbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium citrate, sodium pyrrolidonecarboxylate, potassium citrate, sodium tartrate, potassium tartrate, sodium lactate, sodium succinate, sodium pantothenate, calcium lactate, and sodium laurylsulfate.

Claims 2-5 (canceled).

Claim 6 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 1, which further contains a binder for binding the fibers to each other.

Claim 7 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 6, wherein the binder is at least one compound selected from a group consisting of alkyl celluloses, carboxymethyl cellulose, polyvinyl alcohol, modified polyvinyl alcohols, sodium polyacrylate, sodium alginate, polyethylene oxide, starch, and modified starches.

Claim 8 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 6, wherein a layer containing the binder and the colloidal silica is formed on the surface of a fibrous layer of the water-dispersible fibers.

Claim 9 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 6, wherein a layer of the binder is formed on the surface of a fibrous layer of the water-dispersible fibers containing the colloidal silica.

Claim 10 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 6, which contains the colloidal silica and the binder in a fibrous layer of the water-dispersible fibers.

Claim 11 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 8, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable non-woven fabric having been subjected to water-jetting treatment.

Claim 12 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 9, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable non-woven fabric having been subjected to water-jetting treatment.

Claim 13 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 10, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable non-woven fabric having been subjected to water-jetting treatment.

Claim 14 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 8, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable paper having been prepared in a paper-making process.

Claim 15 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 9, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable paper having been prepared in a paper-making process.

Claim 16 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 10, wherein the fibrous layer is of a water-decomposable paper having been prepared in a paper-making process.

Claim 17 (previously amended): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 1, wherein a weight of the fibers is between a range of 30 to 80 g/m².

Claim 18 (original): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 1, which has a degree of decomposition in water of at most 200 seconds measured in wet according to JIS P-4501, a strength at break in dry of at least 1400 g/25 mm, and a strength at break in wet of at least 150 g/25 mm.

Claim 19 (new): A water-decomposable fibrous sheet comprising:

water-dispersible fibers; and

colloidal silica gel;

wherein said water-dispersible fibers have a fiber length of at most 20 mm and said colloidal silica gel is formed by applying colloidal silica to said sheet and then infiltrating said sheet with an aqueous solution of an electrolyte;

a content of the colloidal silica is 0.25 g to 25 g in terms of silicic acid anhydride, relative to 100 g of said fibers, and the electrolyte has a concentration of at least 0.2% by mass; and

the electrolyte is at least one compound selected from the group consisting of sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate, zinc sulfate, aluminum sulfate, alum, sodium chloride, calcium chloride, magnesium sulfate, zinc nitrate, potassium chloride, sodium carbonate, sodium hydrogencarbonate, ammonium carbonate, sodium citrate, sodium pyrrolidonecarboxylate, potassium citrate, sodium tartrate, potassium tartrate, sodium lactate, sodium succinate, sodium pantothenate, calcium lactate, and sodium laurylsulfate.

Claim 20 (new): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 19, further comprising a binder for binding the fibers to each other; wherein said binder and said colloidal silica are applied to said sheet and then said sheet is infiltrated with an aqueous solution of said electrolyte.

Claim 21 (new): The water-decomposable fibrous sheet as set forth in claim 19, further comprising a binder for binding the fibers to each other; wherein said colloidal silica is applied to said sheet, said binder is applied to said sheet, and then said sheet is infiltrated with an aqueous solution of said electrolyte.